

A DRESSING

FOR

L * * D T * * R * * W,

PREPARED

BY A SURGEON. *4*

Semper ego auditor tantùm, nûnquamnè reponam,
Vexatus totiès rauci theseide codri?

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;

AND SOLD BY COX, ST. THOMAS'S-STREET, BOROUGH,
AND ALL THE BOOKSELLERS.

1797.

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FOR

ROBERT T. W.

PREPARED

BY J. S. F. C. M.



LONDON

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L * * D T * * R * * W.

MY LORD,

THE farcaſtic and illiberal way in which your Lordſhip has treated my profeſſion, will, I truſt, juſtify me in thus openly avowing my deteſtation of your conduct. A public inſult demands a public vindication; and though I am not ſo vain as to think that this letter will make any impreſſion on a mind like your Lordſhip's, yet I hope it will expoſe your inſtability and cruſh the effects of your

B prejudices.

prejudices. What is the Bill against which your lordship has summoned up all the phlegm of your temperament, and all the art of your profession? Is it a bill for the aggrandizement of a few by the ruin of the many?—No! Is it a bill for the extinction of science? No! Is it a bill to deprive the naval surgeon of that final and lasting recompence, a domestic settlement? No!—The bill has for its object the *reverse* of all this.

I need not tell your lordship that in every profession there must be some standard of appreciation.—You will not admit the circulating coin of a country without being sure that it is free from alloy; and will you admit opinions of such infinitely greater moment to the happiness of mankind, without having weighed them at all? If my guinea is bad, I am only a guinea the poorer; but if my opinion or practice is bad, I am not only injured in my own reputation, but transmit my
crime

crime to posterity. But without travelling far for quotations, your own profession shews the expediency of a standard; would you confer the dignity of barrister on that legal tool, a transcriber of parchments? Then how can you suppose that the functions of a surgeon can be adequately exercised by a student in bell-metal mortars! Taking therefore custom for my guide, I lay it down as an unalterable position, that there must be a standard. The court of examining surgeons have hitherto constituted that tribunal. The design of their institution was to protect society from ignorance and empiricism, by giving a diplomatic sanction to men of abilities. But experience, the polar star of science, has shown that their authority was too limited to be effectual; and that the army, navy, and empire at large, have been inundated and overwhelmed with impudent pretenders. The necessity for some reform in this respect is too apparent to be contradicted. In confir-

mation of it we have the testimony of every naval officer. How has the service been supplied with mates—from the hospitals of Great Britain, the proper seminaries of surgical knowledge? No!—From the private abodes, or domestic tuition of respectable surgeons? No!—How then have they originated? Why from the shops of apothecaries!—discarded apprentices, and uneducated porters! But a far greater number of them needy adventurers from the north! Scotch graduates, that never saw a dissection, or even handled a knife!—Precious fellows to be entrusted with lopping off legs and arms in a battle!—Their education is merely this: they come to town as ignorant and as rusticated as peasants. They walk an hospital (if they can afford it) for three months: during which time they acquire a little technical phraseology; and with this superficial instruction they sally forth as mates to distribute life and death to the miserable victims of war.

war. It is a notorious truth, that at sea they amputate like the barbarians of Abyssinia; only with this difference, that they use a knife instead of a hatchet. For the truth of *this*, I appeal to the testimony of all the naval officers, and to the petition of the Delegates. Good God! are the lives of his majesty's seamen, the invulnerable bulwarks, and main palladium of our strength, to be idly sacrificed to please a junto, or pamper the spleen of a faction? Or, will it be any extenuation of our guiltiness either in the present or succeeding ages, that we have been prevented from doing an act of humanity, because it was repugnant to the principles of your lordship? I would not be so destitute of humanity as to wish your lordship the painful experience of so brute-like an operation. But I appeal to your own understanding, whether you in your conscience think, that a man unskilled in anatomy, and unbot-

tomed in all medical science, can be entrusted to amputate a limb, without knowing the course of the arteries ; or extract a splinter or a musket-shot, without a knowledge of the membranes in which it is enveloped ?

But perhaps it is the interest of government to sacrifice the lives of the wounded, rather than incur the expence of their maintenance. This was the policy of the German courts, and perhaps it was the policy of other courts, in a war not less remarkable for the blood it expended, than for the zeal with which the *then Attorney General* encouraged its prosecution. But here, I confess, your lordship has acted in strict conformity to calculation ; that mankind while they condemn your barbarity may admire the economy that produced it : for a horse is estimated at *twenty-eight* pounds, and a man only at *fifteen*. Measures conducted on such ambiguous principles, may be
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compared to the black serpent of India*, who is said to carry within his head an antidote to his own poison. It is therefore a mark of your political prudence to provide a college for horses, while you commit their *riders*, with the rest of their furniture, to rust and oblivion. It is a lamentable truth that the veterinary professors are better paid than the army surgeons, and should your lordship live to patronize their institution, they may look forward with exultation to that auspicious moment, when a red ribband and a collar of horse shoes is to be the honorary reward of their ingenuity. Should future times be solicitous to know your motives for this decided preference, perhaps malevolent fame may whisper that a farrier from a country village was once the *Æsculapius* of your family. But you say that "surgeons in this country are not respectable men."

* Vide Kircheri *Historia Cinenfis*.

Was this assertion to be literally interpreted, in what a contemptuous light should we appear to our neighbours? Suppose some potentate, in any distant, but polished empire, was to read your lordship's harangue; what would be his conclusion? either that the English were barbarians, or the orator a madman; and for this most obvious reason, that medicine is the first art that is practised in human society, because we cannot exist without it, and the last that is brought to perfection on account of its abstruseness; therefore we may exclaim with Milton,

—Not to know us, argues yourselves unknown.

Nothing under heaven being so absurd and improbable, as our negligence of an art which concerns our existence while we are in pursuit of ornamental refinements. Would any man suffer a disease to prey upon his vitals while he was taking lessons from an Attitudinarian?

But

But the fact is, that surgery has been highly cultivated, and that you are wrong, your wit buffoonery, and your whole argument a congestion of falsehoods. As you seem so deficient in information, it is necessary that you should be told, that the respectability of the surgeons commenced with the institution of the French academy; and that the English, prone to adopt, and best calculated to improve it, seized the embryo, nursed it with industry, and have brought it near to perfection. And such, let me tell you, has been our chirurgical fame, that the sovereigns of Europe, in imitation of the Russian Czar, have sent their surgeons to us for education: for it is a truth not to be contradicted, that at the assembly of the allies on the continent, the German, Hanoverian and Prussian soldiers had eminent surgeons instructed at *English* seminaries, while the brave British were suffering perpetual martyrdom from the defect of science in their countrymen. These
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are facts, my Lord, which it is neither in the power of your ingenuity to invalidate, nor of your wit to evade. State emergencies or the calamities of war might have reconciled us even to this; but the evil was more extensive, for these men, on the return of peace, thrust themselves on the bosom of society, and commit the same enormities in domestic practice, that they have been accustomed to exercise on the continent and the ocean,

You have been pleased to descant with some acrimony on our origin.—If origin, my Lord, is to depreciate maturity, there is nothing beneath the moon, that would be safe from your aspersions. We might, without diving far into history, adduce more *illustrious characters* than surgeons that have sprung from *baser beginnings*.—Let it be remembered that the Nile itself is collected from single rivulets—that surgeons were originally incorporated with barbers, is no reason that they should
not

not *now* be separated and exalted. Their primary consolidation is a disgrace to the *age* that united them, and to refuse to recognize their separation is an imputation of dishonour upon *this*.—Like chemists who amalgamate gold with inferior metals, they put them together in a crucible, but all their skill in combination could never effect a coalescence—they were opposite elements; and when your lordship by the depth of your genius has obtained a patent for the junction of contrarities, you will probably amalgamate *them*. But I believe you will first discover the philosopher's stone!

The wonder, my Lord, is not that they are *now* separated, but that they were ever *combined*. Their separation was brought about, not so much from the schism or fermentation of the members, as from the discordant nature of the two occupations. One was a mountain like *Ætna*, replete with combustibles,

bles, the other, a paltry hillock of *mud* that grew like an excrescence on the surface—and the event confirms the theory. For the first inundation which buried the hillock, has propagated in a mighty torrent the blaze of discovery, while the paltry mound that obstructed its overflow, continues with the same insipidity where chance first ordained it to grow. The one was a simple employment, unsusceptible of any refinement. A barber must, in the nature of things, be an unchangeable and unimproveable animal. His business admits of no variation, except new contortions in whetting his razor, or curling a chancellor's wig. But surgery admits of boundless expansion. Its genius, like that of Plautus, soon soared above such mongrel associates; and burst its inclosures by its magnitude. Like a living and a dead acorn planted in the same spot of earth, the one has become a stupendous oak, the shade and ornament of the forest; while the other, deprived
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of growth and vitality, lies mouldering in its first foundations. But your lordship says that surgeons have no pretensions to be erected into a college, because they have no learning. What interpretation you mean to put upon learning, I must confess I do not understand. Perhaps you think there is no learning in the world, but your own; oratory is too apt to breed a contemptuous pride—orators have always been vain men; and your Lordship resembles your predecessors. But you must be a very superficial observer not to know, that surgery, of all the arts which the world has produced, is at once the most ancient, most critical, and profound; and that the longest life, and most recondite speculation, is scarcely sufficient to develop its intricacies, or unfold its inventions. The practice of surgery preceded that of law many hundred years, and its members were held in esteem and veneration long before the age of Justinian had furnished men like

6 your

your Lordship to load them with reproaches. Is every profession to be deemed insignificant that does not produce a Demosthenes?—Is anatomy nothing?—Is physiology nothing?—Are the laws of the animal economy nothing?—Not to mention chemistry, pharmacy, and botany, which form also a part of our education? Or can your Lordship, with all your profundity, speak ten intelligible sentences on either?—Then whence have you the indecency to vilify an art, the mysteries of which you cannot comprehend with all the depth of your genius? If oratory is to be the criterion of wisdom, what were Newton, Locke, or Addison? Were they idiots? No! they were men of reflection—men who employed their minds in the cause of science and morality, without either disturbing the tranquillity of others, or endangering their own. And even in our profession there are men who have reflected long enough to know that talents are only ornamental, as they are

made the instruments of improvement. Reflection is the refreshing rain of the firmament; oratory the boisterous cataract: the one fertilizes the soil over which it is diffused, the other suffocates vegetation, and destroys its fecundity by its own violence. You have, it is true, displayed your power in making an old edifice dilapidate; but if marble monuments were as common as rolls of parchment, I believe there would not be one erected to perpetuate the fame of your victory. Your exploits, like those of Alexander, may be memorable for their splendour, but he who reads the works of Hippocrates, will wonder that you are not both enumerated amongst his diseases.—Had the members of our community been lawyers, they might, like your Lordship, have excited the risibility of a court, confounded a witness, or cajoled a jury. And had your Lordship been bred a barber-surgeon, you had probably been compelled, with all your abilities, to growl beneath the *first* of these

these occupations, because your want of *humanity* had rendered you incapable of the latter: nor would it have been a vast addition even to Mambrino's helmet, that you had been left in the luds.

But your Lordship says our pretensions are "unjust and illegal, because we are not a scientific body."—Surely your Lordship's recollection must be surprisingly shallow so soon to forget, that it is not three years since you conferred *that* dignity on the farriers, for which we have contended. I do not find it recorded that you thundered your anathemas against that bill, or even opposed its introduction. Taking therefore your silence for acquiescence, let me ask you, on what principle, consistent with your present professions, you could suffer so disgraceful a measure to receive the sanction of parliament? Are the carcases of the cavalry horses more important to the community than the lives of its citizens?

citizens? Or have the veterinary professors found arguments to convince you that *horse* pathology is more scientific than *human*?—It is said a horse once trembled at the sight of your Lordship. The tale seems now to be inverted; and *you* are become afraid of a horse.—If so, I believe it will be the first time you ever felt for any thing: taking it therefore as a propitious omen, I hope your Lordship will next begin to feel for mankind. Where was the watchful Argus of parliament when the veterinary bill was in agitation?—Where was then your solicitude for the dignity of literature, or your anxiety for the rights of individuals? Or did they like Æneas approach your Tartarean presence with a talisman to lull the growling Cerberus to sleep? Or what construction are we to put upon a character that displays at once the strength of a giant *and the mutability and levity of a woman*?

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Had you lived in the reign of Caligula, he would have made you one of his consuls ; and perhaps a *niche* in the Vatican near your tutelar faint* would have finally rewarded your services.

But it seems your Lordship exults in the reflection that you have passed your meridian, and shall not want the surgeon's assistance. My Lord, do not too precipitately flatter yourself with an exemption from the ills of mortality : there are other rocks and

* There is a story related by one of the French writers, of a continental lawyer, who applied to the Pope to grant his profession a tutelar faint. His holiness ordered him to be blindfolded and walk three times round the Vatican ; then to kneel, and whatever deity he should embrace would be his tutelar faint.

The obedient attorney did as he was instructed, and stopping before the statue of the angel Gabriel, who is represented as treading upon Satan, he seized with avidity the hoofs of the fallen angel, and has ever since worshipped him as his God.

quicksands.

quicklands in the Archipelago of human life, besides those which environ the island of Calypso; but it seems your Lordship has not been without *concussions* in your voyage, or you would not brag your escape. Considering then that you have passed the gulph, and are now landed safe on the shores of decrepitude, it is neither a specimen of your sense, or your gratitude, to confiscate the property of the pilots who preserved you from shipwreck.—You are neither too old nor too virtuous to have a stone in your bladder, or a cancer in your rectum, and should such a misfortune befall you in your old age, you must not expect that the men who live at the sign of the red rag, will be very *lenient operators*; for the only persons who could extricate you from such a dilemma, are the men whom most you have offended. But perhaps you would consult your family surgeon the farrier: to whom in gratitude for

your bounty we bequeath the *pole* and the *bason*: for since he has been permitted to usurp our profession, it is but justice to your discernment, that we should compliment him with its *badges*. The *bason* may be instrumental in bleeding his horses when he has done with your Lordship; and as we have left off shaving, it is to us a useless *utensil*: while the *prolixity* of the pole will remain a perpetual and just emblem of both your professions. We are become *brief* in our operations, and therefore reject this monstrosity as a *sign* of delay. Your Lordship has been *brief* too in our overthrow; but it is an exception to the course of the law. That you *will* certainly want our assistance, it would be equally uncharitable to hope, and rash to prognosticate. But you may live, like the tyrant Dionysius, to be afraid even of your barber, without the consolation which he possessed, of trusting the

razor to your child: for power never makes such implacable enemies as when it is exercised to the downfall of science. But if we cannot rouse you by policy, let us awaken you to a sense of moral propriety, as things which resist the operation of solvents are often divided by fire. The greatest of poets was descended from a surgeon, and the greatest of the evangelists professed it; if therefore your Lordship has any pretensions, either to taste or religion, you cannot conscientiously oppress their posterity. But perhaps that inattention to morality which we have seen exemplified in *your* character, may have rendered you invulnerable to scriptural quotations. I will not, therefore, press an argument, the strength of which you professionally annihilate, and practically condemn.

In short, ~~my Lord~~, when I come to take
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an impartial view of your conduct on this question, the opinions you have disseminated, and the *plans* you have disconcerted, I sincerely protest that I feel much more for humanity, than I do for myself. Your wit, for argument I cannot call it, was never wielded more malevolently against the current of common utility, nor more unpropitiously for your own reputation. I really thought the expansion of your mind had made you superior to the dirty zeal of a faction; and that any undertaking built on the well-grounded plea of public utility, under any set of men or measures, would have found a warm partizan in your Lordship. But the present contest has eclipsed your laurels only to convince mankind that the most exalted characters, as well as the most servile, are victims to the mean suggestions of interest. On what other supposition was it, either consistent with the greatness of your understanding,

derstanding, or congenial to the fame of T**r**w, to betray the opposing temper of an ex-minister? It is not the portion of man to maintain an unperishable lustre. Your name has hitherto stood high; but, believe me, it will be more dilacerated by this last inglorious measure, than by all your former acerbitude. You have given an irreparable affront to a body of men, whom you cannot injure, and therefore should blush to calumniate.

There is a sort of vanity even in posthumous reputation: and be assured of *this*, that in the annals of medical science your name will ever be recorded with detestation, and pronounced with contempt.

Was I disposed to be prophetic, I might describe the rising generation of surgeons
burning

burning you in effigy like another *Fawkes*, for having endeavoured to blow up their constitution. For us, our measure of revenge will be full, from the inevitable obloquy that will attend your decrepitude.

If you suppose this defeat can hurt our profession, you err most egregiously. To extinguish the fame of the surgeon, you must extinguish the maladies of mankind: and how far you have the ability to do either the one or the other, we may best learn from your own infirmities. The men who will suffer most by your zeal, are the men whose interests you have most espoused and protected. Health is too invaluable to be wasted in experiment. And as you have denied to the public that necessary and indispensable test of surgical skill, an *Anatomical Tribunal*, this measure, instead of distributing practice, will become a ground
of

of monopoly. We could have discriminated genius, we could have selected it from the common mass of empiricism, and have recommended it to notice. But mankind cannot discriminate, and therefore will confide only in men like us, made eminent by successful practice, and sanctioned by general approbation. Who would employ a man because he had practised between the poles, or exercised his knife among the blacks of the East, or the slaves of the Western world? Suppose your Lordship had a dropsy, would you allow yourself to be tapped by a man who never saw the human abdomen? Or who can tell whether in attempting to perforate your belly, he would not ignorantly plunge his trocar either into your intestines or your liver? As patriots, then we say, we sincerely pity your blind, unpopular zeal: but as men acting on the basis of indivi-

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dual interest, we shall reap advantages from your hatred, which we could never have expected from your friendship.

F I N I S .

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